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F E M I N I A D.
A P O E M.

By JOHN DUNCOMBE, M. A. *K*
Fellow of *Corpus Christi* College, CAMBRIDGE.

*Ye shall be nam'd among the famousest
Of Women, sung at solemn Festivals,
Living and Dead recorded, and your Tombs
With Odors visited and annual Flowers.* MILTON.



L O N D O N :

Printed for M. COOPER, at the Globe in *Pater-noster-Row*, 1754.

(Price One Shilling.)

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A P O E M

JOHN DUNCOMBE, M.A.

Author of *Christ's College, Cambridge*

It is well known among the friends of
of *Wentworth*, *the English*
living and dead, that the
With *Others* original and actual *Editors*.



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Printed for M. Cooper, at the Globe in Paternoster Row, 1774.
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following POEM, however favourably it may have been receiv'd among a Circle of private Friends, appears to Disadvantage in Public, as some of the LADIES here mention'd are unknown, their Performances being yet in Manuscript. Should the public Curiosity be hereby rais'd, and could the Diffidence of the fair Authors be so far remov'd as to gratify it, *one* great End of the present Publication would be answer'd. The *other*, is to satisfy a few partial Readers who have not yet learn'd to separate the Critic from the Friend.

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THE

F E M I N I A D.

A P O E M.

S H A L L lordly man, the theme of ev'ry lay,
Usurp the muse's tributary bay ;

In kingly state on *Pindus*' summit sit,
Tyrant of verse, and arbiter of wit?

5 By *Salic* law the female right deny,

And view their genius with regardless eye?

Justice

Justice forbid ! and every muse inspire
 To sing the glories of a sister-quire !
 Rise, rise, bold swain ; and to the list'ning grove
 10 Resound the praises of the sex you love ;
 Tell how, adorn'd with every charm, they shine,
 In mind and person equally divine,
 Till man, no more to female merit blind,
Admire the person, but *adore* the mind.
 15 To these weak strains, O thou ! the sex's friend
 And constant patron, * RICHARDSON ! attend !
 Thou, who so oft with pleas'd, but anxious care,
 Hast watch'd the dawning genius of the fair,
 With wonted smiles wilt hear thy friend display
 20 The various graces of the female lay ;

* The propriety of this address will be owned by all who are acquainted
 with this author's three celebrated pieces, Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles
 Grandison.

Studious from folly's yoke their minds to free,
And aid the gen'rous cause espous'd by thee.

Long o'er the world did *Prejudice* maintain,
By sounds like these, her undisputed reign :

25 " Woman ! she cry'd, to thee, indulgent heav'n

" Has all the charms of outward beauty giv'n :

" Be thine the boast, unrival'd, to enslave

" The great, the wise, the witty, and the brave ;

" Deck'd with the *Paphian* rose's damask glow,

30 " And the vale-lilly's vegetable snow,

" Be thine, to move majestic in the dance,

" To roll the eye, and aim the tender glance,

" Or touch the strings, and breathe the melting song,

" Content to emulate that airy throng,

35 " Who to the fun their painted plumes display,

" And gaily glitter on the hawthorn spray,

" Or

“Or wildly warble in the beechen grove,

“Careless of ought but music, joy, and love.”

Heav’ns! could such artful, flavish sounds beguile

40 The freeborn sons of *Britain*’s polish’d isle?

Could they, like fam’d *Ulysses*’ dastard crew,

: Attentive listen, and enamour’d view,

Nor drive the *Syren* to that dreary plain,

: In loathsome pomp, where eastern tyrants reign,

45 Where each fair neck the yoke of flav’ry galls,

Clos’d in a proud seraglio’s gloomy walls,

And taught, that level’d with the brutal kind,

60 Nor sense, nor souls to women are assign’d.

Our *British* nymphs with happier omens rove,

50 At Freedom’s call, thro’ Wisdom’s sacred grove,

And, as with lavish hand each sister Grace

Shapes the fair form and regulates the face,

Each sister Muse, in blissful union join'd,
Adorns, improves, and beautifies the mind.

55 Ev'n now fond fancy in our polish'd land

Assembled shows a blooming, studious band :

With various arts our rev'rence they engage,

Some turn the tuneful, some the moral page,

These, led by Contemplation, soar on high,

60 And range the heav'ns with philosophic eye ;

While those, surrounded by a vocal choir,

The canvas tinge, or touch the warbling lyre.

Here, like the stars' mixt radiance, they unite

: To dazzle and perplex our wand'ring sight :

65 The Muse each charmer singly shall survey ;

Thus may she best their vary'd charms display,

And tune to each her tributary lay.

: So when, in blended tints, with sweet surprize

Assembled beauties strike our ravish'd eyes,

70 Such as in Lely's melting colours shine,
 Or spring, great Kneller ! from a hand like thine,
 On all with pleasing awe at once we gaze,
 And, lost in wonder, know not which to praise,
 But, singly view'd, each nymph delights us more,
 75 Disclosing graces unperceiv'd before.

First let the Muse with gen'rous ardor try
 To chase the mist from dark Opinion's eye :
 Nor mean we here to blame that father's care,
 Who guards from learned wives his booby heir,
 80 Since oft that heir with prudence has been known,
 To dread a genius that transcends his own :
 The wife themselves should with discretion chuse,
 Since letter'd nymphs their knowlege may abuse,
 And husbands oft experience to their cost
 85 The prudent housewife in the scholar lost :

But

But those incur deserv'd contempt, who prize
Their own high talents, and their sex despise,
With haughty mien each social bliss defeat,
And fully all their learning with conceit :
90 Of such the parent justly warns his son,
And such the Muse herself will bid him shun.

But lives there one, whose unassuming mind,
Tho' grac'd by nature, and by art refin'd,
Pleas'd with domestic excellence, can spare
95 Some hours from studious ease to social care,
And with her pen that time alone employs
Which others waste in visits, cards and noise ;
From affectation free, tho' deeply read,
" With wit well natur'd, and with books well bred ;"

100 With such (and such there are) each happy day
Must fly improving, and improv'd away ;

Inconstancy might fix and settle there,
 And Wisdom's voice approve the chosen fair.

Nor need we now from our own Britain rove
 105 In search of genius, to the Lesbian grove,
 Tho' Sappho there her tuneful lyre has strung,
 And amorous griefs in sweetest accents sung,
 Since here, in Charles's days, amidst a train
 Of shameless bards, licentious and profane,
 110 The chaste^r ORINDA rose ; with purer light,
 Like modest Cynthia, beaming thro' the night :
 Fair Friendship's lustre, undisguis'd by art,
 Glows in her lines, and animates her heart ;
 Friendship, that jewel, which, tho' all confess
 115 Its peerless value, yet how few possess !

^r Mrs. Catherine Phillips, the celebrated Orinda, was distinguish'd by most of the wits of King Charles's reign, and died young ; lamented by many of them in commendatory verses prefix'd to her poems. Her pieces on Friendship are particularly admir'd.

For

For her the never-dying myrtle weaves
 A verdant chaplet of her odorous leaves,
 Her praise, re-echo'd by the Muse's throng,
 Will reach far distant times, and live as long
 120 As Cowley's wit, or fam'd Roscommon's song.

Who can unmov'd hear ² WINCHELSEA reveal
 Thy horrors, Spleen! which all, who paint, must
 My praises would but wrong her sterling wit, ^{feel?}
 Since Pope himself applauds what she has writ.

125 But say, what Matron now walks musing forth
 From the bleak mountains of her native North?
 While round her brows two sisters of the nine
 Poetic wreaths with philosophic twine!

* Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, a lady of great wit and genius, wrote (among others) a poem, much admir'd, on the Spleen, and is prais'd by Mr. Pope, &c. under the poetical name of Ardelia.

Hail,³ COCKBURN, hail! ev'n now from Reason's
 130 Thy Locke delighted culls the choicest flow'rs^{bow'rs}
 To deck, his great successful champion's head,
 And Clarke expects thee in the laurel shade.
 Tho' long, to dark, oblivious want a prey,
 Thy aged worth past unperceiv'd away,
 135 Yet Scotland now shall ever boast thy fame,
 While England mourns thy undistinguish'd name,
 And views with wonder, in a female mind,
 Philosopher, Divine, and Poet join'd!
 The modest Muse a veil with pity throws
 140 O'er Vice's friends and Virtue's female foes ;

³ Mrs. Catherine Cockburn, was the wife of a clergyman, lived obscurely, and died a few years ago in an advanced age in Northumberland ; her works on dramatical, philosophical, and sacred subjects have been lately collected and generally admired. In 1702 she receiv'd a letter of thanks from Mr. Locke, for defending his writings against Dr. Holdsworth of Oxford, and, in 1747, she with equal spirit defended Dr. Clarke's principles against Dr. Rutherford of Cambridge.

Abash'd the views the bold unblushing mien
 Of modern * Manley, Centlivre, and Behn ;
 And grieves to see One nobly born disgrace
 Her modest sex, and her illustrious race.

145 Tho' harmony thro' all their numbers flow'd,
 And genuine wit its ev'ry grace bestow'd,
 Nor genuine wit nor harmony excuse
 The dang'rous fallies of a wanton Muse :
 Nor can such tuneful, but immoral lays,
 150 Expect the tribute of impartial praise :
 As soon might † Phillips, Pilkington and V----
 Deserv'd applause for spotless virtue gain.

* The first of these wrote the scandalous memoirs call'd Atalantis, and the other two are notorious for the indecency of their plays.

† These three ladies have endeavour'd to immortalize their shame, by writing and publishing their own memoirs.

But

But hark ! what ⁴ Nymph, in Frome's embroi-
 der'd vale,
 With strains seraphic swells the vernal gale ?
 155 With what sweet sounds the bord'ring forest rings?
 For sportive Echo catches, as she sings,
 Each falling accent, studious to prolong
 The warbled notes of ROWE's ecstatic song.
 Old Avon pleas'd his reedy forehead rears,
 160 And polish'd Orrery delighted hears.
 See with what transport she resigns her breath,
 Snatch'd by a sudden, but a wish'd for, death !
 Releas'd from earth, with smiles she soars on high
 Amidst her kindred spirits of the sky,
 165 Where Faith and Love those endless joys bestow,
 That warm'd her lays, and fill'd her hopes below.

⁴ The character of Mrs. Rowe and her writings is too well known to be dwelt on here. It may be sufficient to say, that without any previous illness she met at last with that sudden death for which she had always wished.

Nor can her noble ⁵ Friend escape unseen,
 Or from the Muse her modest virtues screen;
 Here, sweetly blended, to our wond'ring eyes,
 170 The Peereſs, Poeteſs and Chriſtian riſe:
 And tho' the Nine her tuneful ſtrains inſpire,
 We leſs her genius, than her heart admire,
 Pleas'd, 'midſt the Great, One truly Good to ſee,
 And proud to tell that SOMERSET is ſhe.
 175 By gen'rous views one ⁶ Peereſs more demands
 A grateful tribute from all female hands;
 One, who to ſhield them from the worſt of foes,
 In their juſt cauſe dar'd Pope himſelf oppoſe.

⁵ Frances, Counteſs of Hertford, now Dutcheſs Dowager of Somerſet, Mrs. Rowe's illuſtrious friend and patroneſs, lamented her death in ſome verſes prefix'd to her poem, and was author of the letters in her collection ſign'd Cleora.

⁶ Anne, Viſcounteſs Irwin, ſiſter to the preſent Earl of Carlisle, with equal judgment and ſpirit eſpouſed her ſex's cauſe; and, in a poetical epiſtle to Mr. Pope, has reſcued them from the aſperſions caſt on them by that ſatyriſt in his Eſſay on the Characters of Women.

Their own dark forms Deceit and Envy wear,
 180 By IRWIN touch'd with * Truth's celestial spear.

By her disarm'd, ye witlings! now give o'er
 Your empty sneers, and shock the sex no more.

Thus bold Camilla, when the Trojan chief
 Attack'd her country, flew to its relief;

185 Beneath her lance the bravest warriors bled,
 And fear dismay'd the host which great Æneas
 led.

But ah! why heaves my breast this pensive
 sigh?

Why starts this tear unbidden from my eye?

What breast from sighs, what eye from tears re-
 frains,

190 When, sweetly mournful, hapless ? WRIGHT
 complains?

And who but grieves to see her gen'rous mind,

For nobler views and worthier guests design'd,

* See Milton, book IV. ver. 811.

? Mrs. Wright, sister to the famous Westleys, has publish'd some pieces,
 which, tho' of a melancholy cast, are wrote in the genuine spirit of poetry.

Admit the hateful form of black Despair,
 Wan with the gloom of superstitious care?
 195 In pity-moving lays, with earnest cries,
 She call'd on heav'n to close her weary eyes,
 And, long on earth by heart-felt woes oppress'd,
 Was borne by friendly Death to welcome rest.

In nervous strains ⁸ CORNALIA's polish'd taste
 200 Has Poetry's successive Progress trac'd,
 From ancient Greece, where first she fix'd her reign,
 To Italy, and Britain's happier plain.

Praise well-bestow'd adorns her glowing lines,
 And manly strength with female softness joins.

205 So female charms and manly virtues grace,

By her example form'd, her blooming race,

~~This lady is author of a poem call'd the Progress of Poetry, publish'd in a~~
 miscellany, call'd the Flower Piece, in 1731; wherein the characters of the
 best Grecian, Roman and English poets are justly and elegantly drawn.

And, fram'd alike to please our ears and eyes,

There new Cornelias and new Gracchi rise.

O that you now, with genius at command,

210 Would snatch the pencil from my artless hand,

And give your sex's portraits, bold and true,

In colours worthy of themselves and you!

Now in ecstatic visions let me rove,

By Cynthia's beams, thro' Brackley's glimm'ring
grove;

215 Where still each night, by startled shepherds seen,

Young ⁹ LEAPOR's form flies shadowy o'er the

Those envy'd honours Nature lov'd to pay

The bryar-bound turf, where erst her Shakespear
lay,

* Mrs. Leapor, daughter to a Northamptonshire gardener, has lately convinced the world of the force of unassisted nature, by imitating and (perchance) equalling some of our most approved poets by the strength of her own parts, the vivacity of her own genius, and a perpetual pursuit after knowledge. And greater without doubt would have been her progress, if the length of her life had borne any proportion to the extent of her abilities.

Now on her darling Mira she bestows;

220 There o'er the hallow'd ground she fondly strows
The choicest fragrance of the breathing spring,
And bids each year her fav'rite linnet sing.

Let cloister'd pedants in an endless round

Tread the dull mazes of scholastic ground ;
225 Brackley unenvying views the glitt'ring train,
Of learning's gaudy trappings idly vain ;
For, spite of all that vaunted learning's aid,
Their fame is rival'd by her rural maid.

So, while in our Britannia's beechen sprays

230 Sweet Philomela trills her mellow lays,

We to the natives of the sultry line

Their boasted race of Parrots pleas'd resign :

For tho' on citron boughs they proudly glow

With all the colours of the watry bow,

Yet

235 Yet no soft strains are warbled by the throng,
 But thro' the grove harsh discord they prolong,
 Tho' rich in gaudy plumage, poor in song.

Now bear me, Clio, to that Kentish strand
 Whose rude o'erhanging cliffs and barren sand
 240 May challenge all the myrtle-blooming bow'rs
 Of fam'd Italia, when at evening hours
 Thy own ¹⁰ ELIZA muses on the shore,
 Serene, tho' billows beat, and tempests roar.
 ELIZA, hail! your fav'rite name inspires
 245 My raptur'd breast with sympathetic fires;
 Ev'n now I see your lov'd Ilyssus lead
 His mazy current thro' th' Athenian mead;

¹⁰ Miss Eliza C—— is equal'd by few of either sex for strength of imagination, soundness of judgment, and extensive knowledge. Tho' mistress of the ancient and modern languages, an excellent poet, and a natural and moral philosopher; so great is her unaffected modesty, 'tis to be fear'd that even this impartial praise will offend her. She has translated, from the Italian, Algarotti's Dialogues on light and colours, and has an admirable nocturnal ode to Wisdom, in Dodsley's Miscellanies.

With you I pierce thro' Academic shades,
 And join in Attic bow'rs th' Aëonian maids ;
 250 Beneath the spreading Plane with Plato rove,
 And hear his morals echo thro' the grove.
 Joy sparkles in the sage's looks, to find
 His genius glowing in a female mind ;
 Newton admiring sees your searching eye
 255 Dart thro' his mystic page, and range the sky ;
 By you his colours to your sex are shown,
 And Algarotti's name to Britain known.
 While, undisturb'd by pride, you calmly tread
 Thro life's perplexing paths, by Wisdom led ;
 260 And, taught by her, your grateful Muse repays
 Her heav'nly teacher in Nocturnal Lays.
 So when Prometheus from th' almighty fire,
 As sings the fable, stole celestial fire,

Swift

275 Haste, haste, ye Nine, and hear a sister sing
The charms of Cynthia and the joys of Spring :
See ! Night's pale goddess with a grateful beam
Paints her lov'd image in the shadowy stream,
While round his vot'ry Spring profusely show'rs
280 " A show of blossoms and a wild of flowers.
O happy nymph, tho' Winter o'er thy head,
Blind to that form, the snow of age shall shed ;
Tho' life's short spring and beauty's blossoms fade,
Still shall thy reason flourish, undecay'd ;
285 Time, tho' he steals the roseate bloom of youth,
Shall spare the charms of virtue and of truth,
And on thy mind new charms, new bloom bestow,
Wisdom's best friend, and only Beauty's foe.

Nor shall thy much lov'd ¹² FLORIMEL remain
290 Unfung, unhonour'd in my votive strain.

D

See

See where the soft Enchantress wand'ring o'er
 The fairy ground that Phillips trod before,
 Exalts her chymic wand, and swift behold
 The basest metals ripen into gold.
 295 Beneath her magic touch with wond'ring eye
 We view vile copper with pure sterling vye ;
 Nor shall the Farthing, sung by her, forbear
 To claim the praises of the smiling fair ;
 Till chuck and marbles shall no more employ
 300 The thoughtless leisure of the truant boy.
 Returning now to Thames's flow'ry side,
 See how his waves in still attention glide :
 And, hark ! what songstrefs shakes her warbling
 throat ?
 Is it the nightingale, or ¹³ DELIA's note ?

¹³ Of this lady I shall say little more than that the happiness of her genius is only excell'd by the goodness of her heart. The Muses have attended her in the few poetical excursions she has made, viz. her Odes to Peace, Health, and the Robin Red-breast, which are here alluded to ; and she has been celebrated in a sonnet by Mr. Edwards, author of the Canons of Criticism.

305 The balmy Zephyrs, hov'ring o'er the fair,
 On their soft wings the vocal accents bear ;
 Thro' Sunbury's low vale the strains rebound,
 Ev'n neighbouring Chertsey hears the chearful
 And wond'ring sees her Cowley's laurel'd shade,
 310 Transported listen to the tuneful maid.

O may those nymphs, whose pleasing pow'r she
 Still o'er their suppliant wave their fof't'ring wings! ^{fings}

O long may Health and foft-ey'd Peace impart
 Bloom to her cheek, and rapture to her heart!

315 Beneath her roof the Red-breast fhall prolong,
 Unchill'd by frofts, his tributary fong;
 For her the Lark fhall wake the dappled morn'
 And Linnet twitter from the bloffom'd thorn.

Sing on, fweet maid! thy Spenser fmiles to fee
 320 Kind Fancy fhed her choicelt gifts on thee,

And bids his Edwards, on the laurel spray
That shades his tomb, inscribe thy rural lay.

With lovely mien ¹⁴ EUGENIA now appears,
The Muse's pupil from her tend'rest years;
325 Improving tasks her peaceful hours beguile,
The sister Arts on all her labours smile,
And while the Nine their votary inspire,
"One dips the pencil, and one strings the lyre."

O may her life's clear current smoothly glide,
330 Unruffled by Misfortune's boist'rous tide!
So while the charmer leads her blameless days
With that Content which she so well displays,
Her own Honoria we in her shall view,
And think her allegoric vision true!

¹⁴ This lady has successfully applied herself to the two sister arts of Drawing and Poetry, and has wrote an ingenious allegory, wherein two pilgrims, Fidelio and Honoria, after a fruitless search for the palace of Happiness, are at last conducted to the house of Content.

335 Thus wand'ring wild among the golden grain
 That fruitful floats on Bansted's airy plain,
 Careless I sung, while Summer's western gale
 Breath'd health and fragrance thro' the dusky vale.

When from a neighbouring hawthorn, in whose
 340 Conceal'd she lay, up-rose th' Aëonian maid:

Pleas'd had she listen'd; and, with smiles, she

“ Cease, friendly swain ! be this thy ^{cry'd,} praise and

“ That thou, of all the num'rous ^{pride,} tuneful throng,

“ First in our cause hast fram'd thy ^{pride,} generous song.

345 “ And ye, our sister choir ! proceed to tread

“ The flow'ry paths of Fame, by Science led !

“ Employ by turns the needle and the pen,

“ And in their fav'rite studies rival men !

“ May all our sex your glorious track pursue,

350 “ And keep your bright examples still in view !

“ These

“These lasting beauties will in youth engage,

“And smooth the wrinkles of declining age,

“Secure to bloom, unconscious of decay,

“When all Corinna’s roses fade away.

355 “For ev’n when love’s short triumph shall be o’er,

“When youth shall please, and beauty charm no
more,

“When man shall cease to flatter; when the eye

“Shall cease to sparkle, and the heart to sigh,

“In that dread hour, when parent dust shall claim

360 “The lifeless tribute of each kindred frame,

“Ev’n then, shall Wisdom for her chosen fair

! “The fragrant wreaths of virtuous fame prepare;

“Those wreaths which flourish in a happier
clime,

“Beyond the reach of Envy, and of Time.

365 “While here, the immortalizing Muse shall save

! “Your darling names from dark Oblivion’s
grave;

“These

“Those

“Those names the praise and wonder shall engage

“ Of every polish'd, wise and virtuous age ;

“ To latest times our annals shall adorn,

370 “ And save from Folly thousands yet unborn.”

11 7 19

T H E E N D.



(31)
“ Those names the praise and wonder shall engage

“ Of every polish'd, wife and virtuous age ;

“ To latest times our annals shall adorn ;

370 “ And live from folly thousands yet unborn.”

T H E E N D .

